

System and Method for Adaptive User Settings**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION****1. Technical Field**

The present invention relates in general to a system and method for adaptive user settings. More particularly, the present invention relates to a system and method for non-invasively collecting user configuration preferences and customizing a page of data based upon the user configuration preferences.

10 2. Description of the Related Art

The Internet has changed the way that a business attracts and retains a customer. In many cases, a customer's exposure to a particular business is solely through the business' website. In this situation, the business' website is the business' most important asset for establishing customer confidence and loyalty.

With that said, a business attempts to organize its website by displaying items that are most interesting to a customer on its home page such that a customer is not required to click through multiple layers in order to view the items. For example, a customer may be interested in a popular children's toy and if the customer does not see a link to the toy on the business' home page, the customer may not spend time "clicking" through the business' website in order to find the toy. Rather, the customer may visit another business' homepage that displays the toy on its home page.

A challenge found, however, is that it may not be apparent to a business as to which items are of most interest to its customers and, in fact, items of interest may be different for each customer. For example, a user 5 that visits a sports website may select a tab corresponding to his favorite team. In this example, it is difficult for the website administrator to determine which "tab" should be displayed first since each user's favorite team may be different. Also in this example, each user may wish to 10 scroll to a particular section of a web page based upon his interest, such as a team's history, a team's current league standings, or a team's player statistics, each of which may be located at a different area of a web page.

Furthermore, when a user visits a particular web page, 15 the user may wish to view the same area within the web page at subsequent visits. A challenge found, however, is displaying a web page that is customized for a particular user based upon previous visits without requiring human interaction at either the customer's client or at the 20 server that is hosting the web page.

What is needed, therefore, is a system and method to non-invasively collect a user's web page viewing preferences and use the collected viewing preferences to provide a user with a customized web page view upon 25 subsequent visits.

SUMMARY

It has been discovered that the aforementioned challenges are resolved by non-invasively collecting user event data, generating configuration preferences based upon 5 the user event data, and using the configuration preferences for subsequent page requests to customize a web page's view. A user uses a client to request a page of data from a server, such as a web page. The server receives the page of data request, and retrieves the 10 requested web page along with a data collector program that is used to non-invasively collect user event data at the client.

The server sends the page of data and the collector program to the client through a computer network, such as 15 the Internet. The client receives the page of data and the collector program, displays the page of data on its display, and loads the collector program that, in turn, initiates particular event handlers. The event handlers monitor and track user events (i.e. mouse movements, 20 keystrokes, etc.) at the client based upon criteria that is included in the collector program.

When the collector program identifies a valid user event, the collector program collects data until the user event is complete. For example, the user may have moved 25 his pointing device over a particular region and kept his pointing device in the region for thirty seconds. The collector program formats the user event data, and sends the user event data to the server through the computer network.

As one skilled in the art can appreciate, user event data may be non-invasively sent to a server using a technique such as creating an image object and composing a URL which is set as the source attribute of the image object. Using this technique, user event data is included in the URL's query string that is sent to a server when the client silently requests the URL. The server returns an image, which may be of varying size as determined by the server. The size of the image may be used to indicate a response message (i.e. returning a 1 pixel x 1 pixel image indicates successful transmission, 2px x 2px image indicates server overflow, etc.).

The server analyzes the user event data, and identifies one or more configuration preferences, such as a scrolling preference, a tabbing preference, and an arrangement preference. For example, the server may identify that the user selected a particular tab, and scrolled down the web page to a particular area. The server sends a configuration preferences storage inquiry to the client that includes one or more questions for the user to answer as to whether it wishes the server to store the identified configuration preferences. For example, the configuration preferences storage inquiry may include the question "Would you like the tab order automatically arranged in this manner at subsequent visits?" In another example whereby a user scrolls to a particular section of a web page, the configuration preferences storage inquiry may include the question "Would you like to automatically view this portion of the web page at subsequent visits?"

The user answers the questions included in the configuration preferences storage inquiry, and the client

sends a storage response to the server. In order to determine whether to store the configuration preferences locally or send the configuration preferences to the client, the server identifies whether it is involved in a user session with the client. If the server is involved in a user session, the server stores configuration preferences in a local storage area. On the other hand, if the server is not involved in a user session, the server sends the configuration preferences to the client to store (i.e. a cookie).

When the user performs subsequent requests for the same page of data, the server uses the configuration preferences to configure the requested web page. If the server is involved in a user session with the client, the server retrieves the configuration preferences from its local storage area. On the other hand, if the server is not involved in a user session with the client, the server receives the configuration preferences from the client and uses the received configuration preferences to configure the requested web page. Once configured, the server sends the customized web page to the client for the client's user to view.

The foregoing is a summary and thus contains, by necessity, simplifications, generalizations, and omissions of detail; consequently, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the summary is illustrative only and is not intended to be in any way limiting. Other aspects, inventive features, and advantages of the present invention, as defined solely by the claims, will become apparent in the non-limiting detailed description set forth below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention may be better understood, and its numerous objects, features, and advantages made apparent to those skilled in the art by referencing the accompanying drawings. The use of the same reference symbols in different drawings indicates similar or identical items.

Figure 1 is a diagram showing a server receiving non-invasive data from a client and setting configuration preferences corresponding to the client's user and a page of data;

Figure 2A is a diagram of a server receiving a page request from a client during a user session, and sending a configured page to the client using locally stored configuration preferences;

Figure 2B is a diagram of a server receiving a page request and configuration preferences from a client, and sending a configured page to the client using the received configuration preferences;

Figure 3 is a high-level flowchart showing steps taken in a server acquiring non-invasive data and formatting a page based upon the non-invasive data;

Figure 4 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a server formatting a page of data based upon stored configuration preferences;

Figure 5 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a server sending a web page to a client, the client collecting data corresponding to a user event, and the client sending the user event data to the server;

Figure 6 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a client non-invasively collecting user event data;

Figure 7 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a client filtering user event data;

5 **Figure 8** is a flowchart showing steps taken in a server identifying and storing a user's configuration preferences; and

Figure 9 is a block diagram of an information handling system capable of implementing the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following is intended to provide a detailed description of an example of the invention and should not be taken to be limiting of the invention itself. Rather, 5 any number of variations may fall within the scope of the invention which is defined in the claims following the description.

Figure 1 is a diagram showing a server receiving non-invasive data from a client and setting configuration 10 preferences corresponding to the client's user and a page of data. User 110 uses client 100 to request a page of data from server 130, such as a web page. Client 100 includes display 115 which displays the particular web page. When user 110 wishes to view a web page, client 100 15 sends page request 120 to server 130 through computer network 125, such as the Internet. For example, user 110 may wish to view his Yahoo home page.

Server 130 receives page request 120 and retrieves the requested web page and a data collection program from page 20 and program store 135. The data collection program is used to non-invasively collect user event data at client 100 and send the user event data to server 130. Page and program store 135 may be stored on a non-volatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive.

25 Server 130 sends page 140 and program 150 to client 100 through computer network 125. Client 100 receives page 140 and program 150, and displays page 140 on display 115 for user 110 to view. Client 100 also loads program 150 which initiates particular event handlers. The event

handlers monitor and track user events at client **100** based upon criteria that is included in program **150**.

When user **110** uses his pointing device to move around the web page, or his keyboard to enter or select 5 information on the web page, collector program **150** identifies the user event and proceeds through a series of steps to determine whether to send corresponding user event data to server **130**. Collector program **150** is interested in user events that occur within the web page, such as mouse 10 movements within regions, scrolling activity, and tab selections (see **Figures 6, 7**, and corresponding text for further details regarding data collection).

When collector program **150** identifies a valid user event, collector program **150** collects data until the user 15 event is complete. For example, user **110** may have moved his pointing device over a particular region and left his pointing device in the region for thirty seconds. Collector program **150** formats the user event data, and sends user event data **160** to server **130** through computer 20 network **125**. Server **130** receives user event data **160** and stores it in data store **165**. Data store **165** may be stored on a non-volatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive.

As one skilled in the art can appreciate, user event 25 data may be non-invasively sent to a server using a technique such as creating an image object and composing a URL which is set as the source attribute of the image object. Using this technique, user event data is included in the URL's query string which is sent to a server when 30 the client silently requests the URL. The server returns

an image which may be of varying size as determined by the server. The size of the image may be used to indicate a response message (i.e. returning a 1 pixel x 1 pixel image indicates successful transmission, 2px x 2px image 5 indicates server overflow, etc.).

Server 130 analyzes the user event data, and identifies one or more configuration preferences. For example, server 130 may identify that user 110 selected a particular tab, and scrolled down the web page to a 10 particular area. Server 130 sends configuration preferences storage inquiry 170 to client 100 that includes one or more questions for user 110 to answer as to whether it wishes server 130 to store the identified configuration preferences. For example, configuration preferences 15 storage inquiry 170 may include the question "Would you like us to re-arrange the tab order of the panes/layers you are viewing so that the second pane is the first one visible?" In another example whereby a user scrolls to a particular section of a web page, configuration preferences 20 storage inquiry 170 may include the question "Would you like us to remember your scrolling preference so that your selected area is automatically displayed after every page request?"

User 110 answers the questions included in 25 configuration preferences storage inquiry 170, and client 100 sends storage response 175 to server 130 through computer network 125. In order to determine whether to store the configuration preferences locally or send the configuration preferences to client 100 to store, server 30 130 identifies whether it is involved in a user session with client 100. If server 130 is involved in a user

session, server **130** stores configuration preferences **185** in a local storage area, such as preferences store **180**. On the other hand, if server **130** is not involved in a user session, server **130** sends configuration preferences **185** to client **100** to store, such as a cookie, to store in cookies **190**.

When user **110** performs subsequent requests for the same page of data, server **130** configures the page of data using configuration preferences **185**, and sends a configured page of data for user **110** to view (see **Figures 2A, 2B**, and corresponding text for further details regarding subsequent page requests).

Figure 2A is a diagram of a server receiving a page request from a client during a user session, and sending a configured page to the client using locally stored configuration preferences. Client **100**'s user previously requested the same page of data whereby server **130** collected user event data, and stored configuration preferences corresponding to the user event data in a local storage area (e.g. preferences store **180**) (see **Figure 1** and corresponding text for further details regarding configuration preferences storage details).

Client **100** sends page request **200** to server **130**. Since client **100** and server **130** are involved in a user session, server **130** is able to identify client **100**'s user. Server **130** looks-up configuration preferences that correspond to the user and the page request in preferences store **180**. Server **130** identifies corresponding configuration preferences, and retrieves configuration preferences **185** from preferences store **180**. Client **100**,

server 130, preferences store 180, and configuration preferences 185 are the same as that shown in **Figure 1**.

Server 130 uses configuration preferences 185 to customize the requested page of data. For example, the 5 configuration preferences may include a tab preference and a scroll preference. In this example, server 130 selects the tab corresponding to the tab preference, scrolls the requested page to the scroll preference area, and stores the page of data as configured page 210. Server 130 then 10 sends configured page 210 to client 100 for client 100's user to view (see **Figure 4** and corresponding text for further details regarding configuration preferences).

Figure 2B is a diagram of a server receiving a page request and configuration preferences from a client, and 15 sending a configured page to the client using the received configuration preferences. **Figure 2B** is similar to **Figure 2A** except that in **Figure 2B**, server 130 receives configuration preferences 185 from client 100 instead of retrieving them from a local storage area. Client 100's 20 user previously requested the same page of data whereby server 130 collected user event data, and sent configuration preferences 185 to client 100 to store in cookies 190 since server 130 and client 100 were not involved in a user session (see **Figure 1** and corresponding 25 text for further details regarding configuration preferences storage details). Cookies 190 is the same as that shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 3 is a high-level flowchart showing steps taken in a server acquiring non-invasive data and formatting a 30 page based upon the non-invasive data. Server processing

commences at **300**, whereupon processing receives a page request from client **100**. For example, the page request may correspond to a web page in which the server manages. Client **100** is the same as that shown in **Figure 1**.

5 A determination is made as to whether the page request includes configuration preferences (decision **310**). For example, client **100** may have previously requested the same page that does not correspond to a user session, and the client's user scrolled down to a particular portion of the
10 web page. In this example, since the web page does not correspond to a user session, the server may have sent configuration preferences to the client, at the user's approval, that include the location at which the user scrolled (see **Figures 1, 2B**, and corresponding text for
15 further details regarding client side configuration preference storage details).

If the request includes configuration preferences, decision **320** branches to "Yes" branch **322** whereupon processing extracts the configuration preferences from the
20 page request and stores the configuration preferences in temp store **330** (step **325**). Temp store **330** may be stored on a nonvolatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive.

On the other hand, if the request does not include configuration preferences, decision **320** branches to "No" branch **328** whereupon processing looks-up configuration preferences in preferences store **180** at step **335**. For example, client **100** may have previously requested the same page that corresponds to a user session, and the client's user selected a particular tab on the web page. In this
30 example, since the web page corresponds to a user session,

the server stores configuration preferences locally, at the user's approval, that includes the user's tab selection (see **Figures 1, 2A**, and corresponding text for further details regarding server-side configuration preference storage details). Preferences store **180** is the same as that shown in **Figure 1** and may be stored on a nonvolatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive.

A determination is made as to whether configuration preferences are stored, either in temp store **330** or preferences store **180**, that correspond to client **100** and the requested page (decision **340**). If configuration preferences do exist, decision **340** branches to "Yes" branch **342** whereupon processing configures the page using the stored configuration preferences (pre-defined process block **350**, see **Figure 4** and corresponding text for further details).

On the other hand, if configuration preferences do not exist, decision **340** branches to "No" branch **348** whereupon processing sends the requested page, without customization, to client **100** at step **360**. Processing then collects user event data from client **100** corresponding to the page of data, such as scrolling, tabbing, and button selection (pre-defined process block **370**, see **Figure 5** and corresponding text for further details). Once processing collects user event data, processing uses the user event data to detect one or more user configuration preferences. For example, the user event data may signify that client **100**'s user scrolled to a particular section of a web page. In addition, processing sends a configuration preferences storage inquiry to client **100** that inquires whether client **100**'s user wishes for the server to store his configuration

preferences (pre-defined process block **380**, see **Figure 8** and corresponding text for further details.

A determination is made as to whether processing should continue (decision **390**). If processing should continue, decision **390** branches to "Yes" branch **392** whereupon processing loops back to receive more page requests. This looping continues until processing should stop, at which point decision **390** branches to "No" branch **398** whereupon processing ends at **399**.

Figure 4 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a server formatting a page of data based upon stored configuration preferences. Page configuration processing commences at **400**, whereupon the server retrieves a page of data from page and program store **135** at step **410**. For example, the page of data may be a sports web page. Page and program store **135** is the same as that shown in **Figure 1** and may be stored on a nonvolatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive.

Processing retrieves page configuration preferences, either from temp store **330** or preferences store **180**, at step **420** based upon whether the configuration preferences were received from a client or whether the configuration preferences are stored locally at the server (see **Figure 3** and corresponding text for further details regarding configuration preferences locations). Temp store **330** and preferences store **180** are the same as that shown in **Figure 3** and **Figure 1**, respectively. In one embodiment, configuration preferences that are received from a client may be stored on the same storage area as locally stored configuration preferences. In this embodiment, the server

retrieves the configuration preferences from preferences store **180**.

A determination is made as to whether the configuration preferences include a scroll preference **5** (decision **430**). For example, a user may have scrolled to a particular section of a sports web page, and chose to store his scrolling location as a configuration preference. If the configuration preferences include a scrolling preference, decision **430** branches to "Yes" branch **432** **10** whereupon processing scrolls the retrieved page to an area corresponding to the configuration preference, and stores the new view as configured page **210**. Configured page **210** is the same as that shown in **Figures 2A** and **2B**. On the other hand, if the configuration preferences do not include **15** a scrolling preference, decision **430** branches to "No" branch **438** whereupon processing bypasses scrolling steps.

A determination is made as to whether the configuration preferences include a tab preference **20** (decision **450**). For example, the user may have selected a tab on a sports web page that corresponds to his favorite team. In this example, the user may have chosen to have his tab selection stored as a configuration preference. If the configuration preferences include a tab preference, decision **450** branches to "Yes" branch **452** whereupon **25** processing selects the tab on configured page **210** that corresponds to the tab preference. On the other hand, if the configuration preference does not include a tab preference, decision **450** branches to "No" branch **458** bypassing tab selection steps.

A determination is made as to whether the configuration preferences include an arrangement preference (decision **470**). For example, the user may have selected a button on a financial web site that corresponds to a mortgage calculator. In this example, the user may have chosen to have the selected button moved to the top of the web page since the user plans to return to the web page and frequently use the mortgage calculator. If the configuration preferences include an arrangement preference, decision **470** branches to "Yes" branch **472** whereupon processing arranges configured page **210** corresponding to the arrangement preference. On the other hand, if the configuration preferences do not include an arrangement preference, decision **470** branches to "No" branch **478** bypassing tab selection steps. Processing returns at **490**.

Figure 5 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a server sending a web page to a client, the client collecting data corresponding to a user event, and the client sending the user event data to the server. Client processing commences at **500**, whereupon the client waits for a page request from user **110** (step **505**). For example, user **110** may enter a URL location to view a particular web page. When the client receives the page request from user **502**, the client sends page request **120** to a server at step **510**.

Server processing commences at **520**, whereupon the server receives page request **120** at step **525**. The server retrieves the requested page and a corresponding data collector program from page and program store **135** at step **530**. Page and program store **135**, user **110**, and page request **120** are the same as that shown in **Figure 1**.

The server sends page **140** and program **150** to the client at step **535**, and the client receives page **140** and program **150** at step **545**. The client displays the request page on the client's display and loads the collector program (step **550**). The client waits for a user event at step **555**, such as user **110** moving his pointing device. When the client detects a user event, a determination is made as to whether the user event is requesting a new web page (decision **560**). For example, the user may select a hyperlink on the displayed web page that points to a second web page. If the user event is a new page request, decision **560** branches to "Yes" branch **562** which loops back to send and process a new page request. This looping continues until the client detects a user event that is not a new page request, at which point decision **560** branches to "No" branch **564** whereupon the client collects user event data corresponding to the user event, and sends user event data **160** to the server (pre-defined process block **565** see **Figure 6** and corresponding text for further details regarding data collection).

The server receives user event data **160**, stores the data in data store **165**, and may send an acknowledgement message (e.g. acknowledgement **572**) to the client indicating that the server received user event data **160** (step **570**). User event data **160** and data store **165** are the same as that shown in **Figure 1**. A determination is made as to whether the server should continue processing (decision **575**). If the server should continue processing, decision **575** branches to "Yes" branch **577** which loops back to receive more page requests. This looping continues until the server stops processing, at which point decision **575**

branches to "No" branch **579** whereupon server processing ends at **580**.

The client receives acknowledgement **572** which informs the client that the server received the user event data.

5 If the client did not receive acknowledgement **572** within a particular timeframe, the client may re-send user event data **160** to the server until the client receives an acknowledgement message from the server. A determination is made as to whether the client should continue processing
10 (decision **585**). If the client should continue processing, decision **585** branches to "Yes" branch **587** which loops back to process more user requests. This looping continues until client processing should stop, at which point decision **585** branches to "No" branch **589** whereupon client
15 processing ends at **590**.

Figure 6 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a client non-invasively collecting user event data. Processing commences at **600**, whereupon the client identifies an event type corresponding to a newly detected
20 event (step **610**). For example, a user may have moved his mouse into a region, such as "Region 1", whereby processing identifies the event type as "Region 1 mouseover".

A determination is made as to whether processing should filter the user event data (decision **620**). Using
25 the example described above, processing may be configured such that the client should send region 1 user event data to the server once per session. In this example, processing sends region 1 user event data the first time a user's pointing device enters region 1, and then filters

out (i.e. doesn't send) subsequent region 1 user event data.

If processing should filter the user event data, decision **620** branches to "Yes" branch **622** whereupon the 5 user event data is filtered using collection threshold settings that are retrieved from collection store **625** (pre-defined process block **630**, see **Figure 7** and corresponding text for further details). Collection store **625** may be stored on a non-volatile storage area, such as a computer 10 hard drive.

On the other hand, if processing should not filter the user event data and should send data to the server corresponding to each user event, processing branches to "No" branch **628** whereupon processing tracks the user event 15 until completion (step **650**). For example, processing may track the amount of time that a user places his mouse in a particular region. Once the user event is completed (i.e. the mouse is moved out of a region), processing sends the user event data to server **130** (step **660**). Server **130** is 20 the same as that shown in **Figure 1**. If server **130** receives the data intact, server **130** sends acknowledgement **572** to the client. Acknowledgement **572** is the same as that shown in **Figure 5**. On the other hand, if server **130** did not receive the data intact, server **130** may not send a 25 response, or server **130** may send an error message to the client that indicates that the user event data included errors.

A determination is made as to whether the client received an acknowledgment message from server **130** 30 (decision **680**). If the client did not receive an

acknowledgement message, decision **680** branches to "No" branch **682** which loops back to re-send the user event data. This looping continues until the client receives an acknowledgement message, at which point decision **680** branches to "Yes" branch **688** whereupon processing returns at **690**. In one embodiment, processing may be configured to limit the number of attempts to send the user event data to the server, such as five attempts. In this embodiment, the client sends the user event data to the server a maximum of 10 five times.

Figure 7 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a client filtering user event data. For example, processing may be configured such that the client should capture user event data corresponding to a particular event one time per session and then filter out (i.e. do not capture) subsequent user event data for the particular event during the remaining session.

Processing commences at **700**, whereupon processing retrieves collection threshold settings corresponding to 20 the user event from collection store **625** (step **702**). Collection threshold settings include settings that are configured to filter user event data. For example, a vendor may wish to set an out-of-region threshold, such as ten seconds, for a region on his web page such that once 25 user event data is collected for the region, user events are not tracked for another ten seconds. Collection store **625** is the same as that shown in **Figure 6**.

Processing looks-up a location collection flag in collection store **625** (step **705**). The location collection 30 flag corresponds to a particular user event and identifies

whether the event has occurred. For example, if the user event is a "mouse in region 1" event, processing retrieves the location collection flag that corresponds to a "mouse in region 1" event. A determination is made as to whether 5 the location collection flag is cleared (decision 710). If the location collection flag is clear, decision 710 branches to "Yes" branch 712 whereupon processing tracks the user event at step 750.

On the other hand, if the flag is set, decision 710 10 branches to "No" branch 718 whereupon processing performs steps to identify whether to collect user event data based upon the last occurrence of the user event and the collection threshold settings. Processing compares the collection threshold settings with the user event's 15 properties at step 730. Using the example described above, processing identifies the time that the new region 1 mouseover event occurs, identifies when location collection flag was last set, and compares the difference in time with the collection threshold settings.

20 A determination is made as to whether to clear the collection threshold settings based on the comparison performed in step 730 (decision 740). If processing should clear the location collection flag, decision 740 branches to "Yes" branch 744 whereupon processing clears the 25 location collection flag (step 745) and tracks the user event at step 750. Using the example described above, the location collection flag may have been set twenty seconds prior to the current user event. In this example, processing clears the location collection flag since the 30 time between the two user events is longer than the corresponding collection threshold settings. On the other

hand, if processing should not clear the location collection flag, decision **740** branches to "No" branch **742** bypassing location collection flag clearing steps, and returning at **790**.

5 Processing tracks the user event until completion at step **750**. Using the example described above, processing tracks the "mouse in region 1" event until the user moves his pointing device out of region 1. A determination is made as to whether the user event meets collection
10 threshold settings (decision **755**). For example, an "in-region" collection threshold setting may be configured to require a user's pointing device to be in a particular region for a minimum amount of time in order to consider the user event valid, such as ten seconds. If the user
15 event data does not meet collection threshold settings, decision **755** branches to "No" branch **757** bypassing user event data sending steps.

On the other hand, if the user event data meets collection threshold settings, decision **755** branches to
20 "Yes" branch **759** whereupon processing sends the user event data to server **130** (step **760**). If server **130** receives the user event data intact, server **130** sends acknowledgement **572** to the client. Server **130** and acknowledgement **572** are the same as that shown in **Figure 1** and **Figure 5**,
25 respectively. On the other hand, if server **130** did not receive the user event data intact, server **130** may not send a response, or server **130** may send an error message to the client that indicates that the user event data included errors.

A determination is made as to whether the client received an acknowledgment message from server 130 (decision 770). If the client did not receive an acknowledgement message, decision 770 branches to "No" 5 branch 772 which loops back to resend the user event data. This looping continues until the client receives an acknowledgement message, at which point decision 770 branches to "Yes" branch 778 whereupon processing sets the location collection flag at step 780, and processing 10 returns at 790.

In one embodiment, processing may be configured to limit the number of attempts to send the user event data to the server, such as five attempts. In this embodiment, the client sends the user event data to the server a maximum of 15 five times.

Figure 8 is a flowchart showing steps taken in a server identifying and storing a user's configuration preferences. Preference detection and storage processing commences at 800, whereupon processing analyzes user event 20 data that is stored in data store 165 at step 810. User event data was non-invasively collected from a client and corresponds to a particular web page (see **Figures 5, 6, 7,** and corresponding text for further details regarding user event data collection). Data store 165 is the same as that 25 shown in **Figure 1**.

Processing identifies scrolling, tabbing, and arrangement user selections using the user event data at step 820. For example, the user event data may include a tab selection that a user selected on the particular web 30 page. Processing includes the user selections in a configuration preferences storage inquiry to be sent to a

user (step **830**). For example, the configuration preferences storage inquiry may include the question "Would you like us to re-arrange the tab order of the panes/layers you are viewing so that the second pane is the first one visible?" In another example, where a user scrolls to a particular section of a web page, the configuration preferences storage inquiry may include the question "Would you like us to remember your scrolling preference so that your selected area is automatically displayed after every page request?"

Processing sends the configuration preferences storage inquiry to client **100** at step **840**. The client's user responds to the inquiry, and the server receives the storage response from client **100** at step **850**. Client **100** is the same as that shown in **Figure 1**. A determination is made as to whether client **100**'s user wishes to store the configuration preferences (decision **860**). If client **100**'s user does not wish to store the configuration preferences, decision **860** branches to "No" branch **862** whereupon processing returns at **865**.

On the other hand, if client **100**'s user wishes to store the configuration preferences, decision **860** branches to "Yes" branch **868** whereupon a determination is made as to whether client **100** is in a user session with the server (decision **870**). For example, client **100**'s user may have logged into a sports website using a user id and a password. In this example, the server is able to identify the user the next time the user logs into the website and retrieve configuration preferences from the server's local storage area. If client **100** is in a user session with the server, decision **870** branches to "Yes" branch **878** whereupon the server stores the configuration preferences on a local

storage area, such as preferences store **180**. Preferences store **180** is the same as that shown in **Figure 1** and may be stored on a nonvolatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive. Processing returns at **899**.

5 On the other hand, if client **100** is not in a user session with the server, and, therefore, the server does not have a way to identify client **100**'s user, decision **870** branches to "No" branch **872** whereupon the server sends the configuration preferences to client **100** for client **100** to
10 store in a storage area, such as a cookie (step **880**). Processing returns at **899**.

Figure 9 illustrates information handling system **901** which is a simplified example of a computer system capable of performing the computing operations described herein.
15 Computer system **901** includes processor **900** which is coupled to host bus **902**. A level two (L2) cache memory **904** is also coupled to host bus **902**. Host-to-PCI bridge **906** is coupled to main memory **908**, includes cache memory and main memory control functions, and provides bus control to handle
20 transfers among PCI bus **910**, processor **900**, L2 cache **904**, main memory **908**, and host bus **902**. Main memory **908** is coupled to Host-to-PCI bridge **906** as well as host bus **902**. Devices used solely by host processor(s) **900**, such as LAN card **930**, are coupled to PCI bus **910**. Service Processor
25 Interface and ISA Access Pass-through **912** provides an interface between PCI bus **910** and PCI bus **914**. In this manner, PCI bus **914** is insulated from PCI bus **910**. Devices, such as flash memory **918**, are coupled to PCI bus **914**. In one implementation, flash memory **918** includes BIOS
30 code that incorporates the necessary processor executable code for a variety of low-level system functions and system boot functions.

PCI bus **914** provides an interface for a variety of devices that are shared by host processor(s) **900** and Service Processor **916** including, for example, flash memory **918**. PCI-to-ISA bridge **935** provides bus control to handle transfers between PCI bus **914** and ISA bus **940**, universal serial bus (USB) functionality **945**, power management functionality **955**, and can include other functional elements not shown, such as a real-time clock (RTC), DMA control, interrupt support, and system management bus support. Nonvolatile RAM **920** is attached to ISA Bus **940**. Service Processor **916** includes JTAG and I2C busses **922** for communication with processor(s) **900** during initialization steps. JTAG/I2C busses **922** are also coupled to L2 cache **904**, Host-to-PCI bridge **906**, and main memory **908** providing a communications path between the processor, the Service Processor, the L2 cache, the Host-to-PCI bridge, and the main memory. Service Processor **916** also has access to system power resources for powering down information handling device **901**.

Peripheral devices and input/output (I/O) devices can be attached to various interfaces (e.g., parallel interface **962**, serial interface **964**, keyboard interface **968**, and mouse interface **970** coupled to ISA bus **940**. Alternatively, many I/O devices can be accommodated by a super I/O controller (not shown) attached to ISA bus **940**.

In order to attach computer system **901** to another computer system to copy files over a network, LAN card **930** is coupled to PCI bus **910**. Similarly, to connect computer system **901** to an ISP to connect to the Internet using a telephone line connection, modem **975** is connected to serial port **964** and PCI-to-ISA Bridge **935**.

While the computer system described in **Figure 9** is capable of executing the processes described herein, this computer system is simply one example of a computer system. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that many other computer system designs are capable of performing the processes described herein.

One of the preferred implementations of the invention is an application, namely, a set of instructions (program code) in a code module which may, for example, be resident in the random access memory of the computer. Until required by the computer, the set of instructions may be stored in another computer memory, for example, on a hard disk drive, or in removable storage such as an optical disk (for eventual use in a CD ROM) or floppy disk (for eventual use in a floppy disk drive), or downloaded via the Internet or other computer network. Thus, the present invention may be implemented as a computer program product for use in a computer. In addition, although the various methods described are conveniently implemented in a general purpose computer selectively activated or reconfigured by software, one of ordinary skill in the art would also recognize that such methods may be carried out in hardware, in firmware, or in more specialized apparatus constructed to perform the required method steps.

While particular embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that, based upon the teachings herein, changes and modifications may be made without departing from this invention and its broader aspects and, therefore, the appended claims are to encompass within their scope all

such changes and modifications as are within the true spirit and scope of this invention. Furthermore, it is to be understood that the invention is solely defined by the appended claims. It will be understood by those with skill in the art that if a specific number of an introduced claim element is intended, such intent will be explicitly recited in the claim, and in the absence of such recitation no such limitation is present. For a non-limiting example, as an aid to understanding, the following appended claims contain usage of the introductory phrases "at least one" and "one or more" to introduce claim elements. However, the use of such phrases should not be construed to imply that the introduction of a claim element by the indefinite articles "a" or "an" limits any particular claim containing such introduced claim element to inventions containing only one such element, even when the same claim includes the introductory phrases "one or more" or "at least one" and indefinite articles such as "a" or "an"; the same holds true for the use in the claims of definite articles.